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RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6126
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0005
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4368
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000050

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/IR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/13/2020

TAGS: [PREL](#) [IDB](#) [IR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: IRAN/TURKMENISTAN: IRANIAN BUSINESSMAN INFURIATED;
IRGC-LINKED COMPANY GETS RAILWAY CONTRACT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) In a January 7 meeting with Iran Watcher, Golammreza Gieahpour, the General Director of Iran Samen's Ashgabat branch, said that he was "surprised, angry and very, very disappointed" that the UAE-based firm Pars Energy, owned and run by Iranian citizen Ahmad Ramazani, had been awarded the contract by the Iranian and Turkmen governments to construct the 700-kilometer Atrak-Gorgan railroad line linking Turkmenistan and Iran. The project is being financed in part by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Gieahpour said that his firm had been perfecting a project proposal for the railroad line for the past 35 months, and until recently had understood that their only real competition for the contract was the Iranian company Travers. Gieahpour asserted that Pars Energy had essentially "appeared out of nowhere" despite Iran Samen having successfully lowered its cost estimate per kilometer of railway line. He also alleged that Pars and its owner/manager, Ahmad Ramazani, are closely affiliated with the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). He further alleged that Ahmad Ramazani and his brother Mahmoud have "long and close ties to the Iranian regime," and that as university students, they had participated in the 1979 takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. He believes that both the Turkmen government and the IDB are likely unaware of Pars Energy's IRGC connection, but that "they should be," particularly since Turkmenistan continually emphasizes its policy of "positive neutrality" in foreign affairs.

12. (C) Gieahpour had been invited to both the meeting on January 5 between local Iranian expats/businessmen and visiting Iranian president Ahmadinejad and the opening ceremony the following day of the Dovletabad-Serakhs-Hangiran gas pipeline. However, he said that, given the disappointing results of the railroad tender, he had "no desire" to attend either and declined the invitations.

PRO-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN TEHRAN: "TOTALLY ORCHESTRATED"

13. (C) Gieahpour, who had just returned to Ashgabat after a visit to Iran in December, said he had witnessed first-hand the pro-government rallies that took place on December 30. He said he saw busloads of IRGC members and supporters being

brought in from outside the city to take part. He also heard from friends and acquaintances that government workers had been required to participate in the events. Even some elderly people he met on the streets told him that while out in public and at government offices for other purposes, they had been told to go out onto the streets for the rally. One elderly woman he encountered seemed confused and reportedly told him, "I'm not sure why I'm here."

IRGC: "ARMED TO THE TEETH"

¶4. (C) Gieahpour predicts that the IRGC, which h described as "armed to the teeth," are so "dug in" in Iran that the opposition Green Movement has almost no chance of prevailing in its efforts to bring about significant change in the country. He said that Supreme Leader Khamenei is "powerless, controlled by the IRGC." He also predicts that Khamenei's son Mojtaba, who, in his words, has no religious credentials at all and "bought his degree" from the seminary in Qom, is likely to succeed him when he dies. The only way to bring down the IRGC, he said, is to stop the flow of money to it from the many businesses it owns or controls inside and outside of Iran.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: As we have no corroborating information regarding Gieahpour's assertions about Pars Energy or the Ramazani brothers, we cannot confirm the accuracy of the allegations. An internet search indicated that Ahmad Ramazani was a university student from 1985-87, which would make him rather young at the time to have participated in the Embassy takeover in 1979. END COMMENT.
CURRAN